

ROMANIAN DIPLOMACY WITHIN THE SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE YEAR 1866

Cristinel Ioan MURZEA¹

Abstract: *The year of 1866 would represent a challenge for Romanian diplomacy, as by the dethronement of Al. I. Cuza, the great powers would be led to discuss the rescinding of the 1859 act and, implicitly, the return to the political regime which would have caused the two principalities serious damage to their autonomy, both on an internal level, as well as external and it would be met with opposition from the great powers, as the young Romanian national state would meet its major objectives, thus creating a favorable international context in order to acquire state independence.*

Key words: *regulation, sovereignty, supremacy, diplomacy, state*

The geo - strategic position of the young national Romanian state, located on the borders of the three main empires, as well as its important natural resources, have led it to become an important actor within the south-east Europe, in the context in which it would amplify the fight for national freedom, as well as that of acquiring independence of the oppressed people of the Balkan Peninsula from the Ottoman Empire .

Acquiring state independence will thus become a major country objective, a direction in which all Romanian diplomatic circles will act together within the interstate relations, both on regional level as well and on European level.

The reinstating of a new constitutional regime by passing the 1866 Constitution, as well as the act which led to the dethroning of Al. I. Cuza were obvious signs which showed an independence tendency as opposed to “the system of European collective guarantees”; as all these acts converged to a position of challenging the new regime by the diplomatic compromise negotiated and achieved between the High Porte, the Habsburg Empire and Tzarist Russia, who were all looking to ensure their authority and sovereignty in this geographical area.

In this extremely tense international context determined by the war in which Austria and Prussia were involved, the February 11th, 1866 act, which led to the dethroning of Al.I. Cuza was received with great reserve by the diplomatic chancelleries of the great powers.

¹ *Transilvania* University of Brasov, cristinel.murzea@unitbv.ro,

Thus, “the Romanian matter which would cause difficulty of the most serious kind in the entire south east of Europe would arise” (Leonid Boicu; V.Cristian; Gheorghe Platon; I.Agrigoroaiei, 1980, p.187).

The overturn of the political regime of Al. I. Cuza was a certainty in the general opinion of the diplomats of the great powers; however, they were displeased by the fact that they were once again confronted with the done deed and were deprived of their “right to decide not only in regard to the time, but also in regard to the manner in which this delicate situation would be solved” (Henry P., 1930, p.161-173).

Romanian political diplomacy, by considering the autonomous state of the united principalities, proceeded to dethrone Cuza without requesting consent from the great powers, an act which was considered by the chancelleries of the great powers as “a true revolution”.

The act itself would be qualified by European diplomatic circles as an affront to the regime of collective guarantees, as well as an endeavour of Romanian politicians meant to place “the Romanian matter” on the stage of international relations under a different form.(Riker T.W., 1944, p.624).

The dethroning of Al. I. Cuza meant an affirmation of the internal autonomy of the united principalities, which normally led to a new stage, namely that of acquiring state independence, but also created a new problem, namely the appointment of a foreign prince as the head of state, an element which was likely to create further contradiction with the great powers.

A larger vision of the year 1866 brought upon a confrontation between European diplomacy represented by the great powers who aimed to maintain the position they acquired in the area and the increasingly strong position of the Romanian political circles, who made no secret of the fact that all their diplomatic efforts were aimed at acquiring state independence, which obviously brought upon new political, strategic and diplomatic dimensions in south east Europe.

Given all these, almost all countries located in south eastern Europe aimed to obtain independence from the Ottomans, but they also desired to put a stop, by using the means offered by the diplomacy of those times, to the expanding tendency of Austria and Russia in this area.

Both Austria and Russia had common objectives in the area; however there were differences “in regard to the means, methods and courses of action” (Leonid Boicu; V.Cristian; Gheorghe Platon; I.Agrigoroaiei, 1980, p.189).

In this context, we agree with the scholars’ opinion according to which Austria, although manifested significant interest for the Romanian problem, was unable to fully and openly manifest its intentions and act accordingly, as it was threatened by Prussia and aimed to secure support from France, which was impossible to obtain by adopting an aggressive policy in the matter of the united principalities (Henry P., 1930, p.186-187).

Unlike Austrian diplomacy, the Tzarist one was much more predictable, manifesting a constant line which aimed to undo the union of 1859 and acknowledging the moment of February 11th, 1866 as an appropriate moment in order to disintegrate the young unified Romanian state. Furthermore, Russian external policy encouraged Turkey and tried to

convince its representatives to diplomatically act in order to retract approval of the unification of the principalities and return to the status held before 1859, which would have been an obvious improvement for the Ottoman Porte in this area.

By manifesting this duplicitous position, Tzarist diplomacy, although it challenged the 1856 Paris peace treaty, supported the strict enforcement of the international treaties which reflected the unequivocal will of the signing states, policies meant to preserve the Ottoman State both on a territorial level, as well as in regard to its place in the context of international relations.

It was shown that its endeavors of supporting the Ottoman Empire, the giant with "feet of clay" were aimed at protecting Russia's interests which collided with the normal tendency of small people which were still subjected to the Ottoman Porte.

Russia's diplomatic persistence was so aggressive that it demanded, by the voice of external affairs minister Gorceakov, as well as of general Ignatiev, that the Ottomans undertake military intervention in the principalities, an endeavor which would have reopened the oriental issue.

In this context, "Tzarist Russia did not dare to expand the oriental crisis as it feared the creation of a new coalition" (Debidour A., 1891, p.324-325), thus it used Turkey for this endeavour.

Given this international diplomatic context, Russia's position was hostile, much like Turkey and Austria, who would constantly support the separation of the Romanian Principalities, a challenge which was fought with efficient means by the Romanian political circles and the diplomacy of the young national state.

In order to solve, "the Romanian matter" caused by the act of February 11th, 1866, the great powers agreed to organize a new conference similar to those of 1856, 1858 and 1859 which would again "decide de nobis sine nobis" (Sturza Dimitrie, 1912, p.793-794).

As a result of the diplomatic endeavors of the great powers, the Paris Conference was initiated and began its works on March 10th, 1866.

Both Russia and Turkey, powers supported by Austria, have demanded the respect of the provisions of the 1861 decree and, as a consequence, demanded the rescind of the January 24th, 1859 act and the separation of the unified principalities. Thus, Turkey's ambassador Sefvet Paşa "demanded, on the very first day of the conference, the complete exclusion of the issue of the succession of Al. I. Cuza by appointing a foreign prince on Romania's throne from the debates of the conference".

This position would be met with a definite refusal by the French diplomacy, who wanted the Romanian principalities to remain united and the problem of succession by naming a foreign prince on the throne to remain an open matter, to be solved by a future decision. France's position would be supported by the fact that England was neutral and Austria had to give in, considering its particular situation caused by the pressure from Prussia; eventually, Austria had to respect the agenda of both France and England, thus declaring itself hostile to the unification of the Romanian Principalities.

Russia believed this was the way by which it will be able to question the existence and legal effects of the 1856 Paris treaty, thus hoping that its double discourse within the debates would reiterate the necessity of respecting all international treaties, but

essentially aiming to rescind these treaties when they threatened Russia's interests in the Balkan Peninsula.

Their opinion of Russian diplomats was that “the 1859 unification was qualified as a failed experience which caused internal dissatisfaction and serious trouble for the great powers” whose policy turned out to be a failure.

Russia’s representative at the 1866 ambassador's conference demanded even more, under the pretext of the so called separatist attitudes in Moldavia, which invoked a process of “romanization” of this province by the organization of two separate gatherings in Iasi and Bucharest, which would again debate the issue of the unification (Henry P. 1930, 211).

However, Russia followed its own principles and external policy interests which aimed to expansion in south east Europe; for these reasons, the young national Romanian state was an obstacle in Russia’s endeavors.

These reasons emphasized the different opinions expressed by the diplomacy of the great powers, as they did not reach a consensus in regard to the appointment of a foreign prince and, as a consequence, the political circles of the Principalities, namely its temporary government, had to act independently; for these reasons, “the representatives of the great powers at the Paris Conference, were quickly overshadowed by events which would question the very reason of an European forum which was unable to impose its authority, as it was ground by contradictions and unable to reach a consensus” (Sturza Dimitrie, 1912, p.874-875).

Eventually, the final European conference determined by the “Romanian matter” turned out to be useless, as European diplomacy accepted the fact that the “forum” was merely informed of the future developments of events which would prove the efficiency “of the done deal policy” which provided full freedom of action to Romanian diplomats who, once a foreign prince accepted by the great powers was appointed, took an important step in implementing the strategic national objective, namely acquiring independence of the young Romanian state.

On a judicial-diplomatic level, a “sui generis” statute was created, that of an anticipated subject of public international law, as until the express recognition of its independence there was just one more step to take.

The Romanian state would become an important actor in the area, as its actions would become an example for other small countries who aspired to obtain the same social and national status in the context of the 19th century, a time which offered favorable background for the enforcement of legitimate historical rights.

However, we must state the reality according to which the seven great powers were in an obvious crisis of authority, caused by the opposing interests they had in the area and the issues which occurred on the international agenda, namely the imminent Austrian - Prussian war which caused the Romanian matter to fall to second place. However, this does not impair the huge efforts of the Romanian diplomacy who constantly supported its own interests and refused the brutal intervention of the great powers in the matters of its internal and external policy, thus acquiring the „ante factum,, attributes of supremacy and sovereignty which will form the status of a subject of international law on the stage of European international political life.

The attitude of the Romanian political circles of the united principalities, regardless of their orientation, as well as the constant overseas support from Romanian patriots, much like Romanian immigrants, made it possible for this moment to represent a victory and a notable event in regard to applied diplomacy in the context of international relations of the 7th decade of the 19th century.

We must also notice the attitude of the temporary government which, after Al.I. Cuza was dethroned, had two choices, namely to tacitly or explicitly accept the decisions of the great powers within the ambassadors conference of 1866, thus promoting a noncombat policy, or to assume responsibility by following predetermined and predictable objectives in regard to its national interest, an alternative which would not be possible if it did not undertake an active position meant to create the necessary background of a completely autonomous political regime, a sine qua non condition for the subsequent acquiring of the status of independent state.

Romanian diplomacy proved to be mature, as its endeavors dismantled external opposition which threatened the existence of the unity of the young national state, as well as the promotion of a policy which was true to the national party, expressed by the platform "through ourselves" thus ensuring the succession.

In this strenuous international context which has again emphasized the divergent interest of the great powers in the area, the aggressive position of Austria must be noticed, but especially that of Russia, both of whom wanted to perform the legal will which would create a new legal and institutional configuration, other than the one provided by the Paris Conferences of 1856 and 1858, where it was agreed upon an "ad hoc constitutional regime" in regard to the Romanian principalities, the Romanian Country and Moldavia; all these added to the string of political and diplomatic tensions, solved by the Romanian diplomacy by the most useful means, depending on the national interest of the Romanian people.

The constant and firm position of France and England, who expressed concern over the political-diplomatic intervention of the Tzarist Empire in south east Europe, as well as the increased pressure over Turkey, would provide the decision circles of the principalities the means to overthrow the diplomatic endeavors of the anti revisionist powers, by specific actions based on institutions of international public law regulated by the legal content of the formal sources of international law.

At the same time, members of the Romanian government proved great political maturity as their actions eluded the temporary constitutional regime recommended to the interim Romanian government, which would later transform in a "simple office of affairs" limited to "maintaining internal order and solving current administrative matters" (Leonid Boicu; V.Cristian; Gheorghe Platon; I.Agrigoroaiei, 1980, p.193).

In this context, in our opinion, the year 1866 concluded with a remarkable victory of Romanian diplomacy which, a decade before acquiring state independence, proved that, by specific political-diplomatic actions, managed to overthrow all anti unionist and destabilizing actions of Austria, Russia and Turkey.

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